



ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF BEAUTY PRODUCT ADVERTISEMENTS IN COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Zainal Arifin Renaldo
Politeknik Caltex Riau, Indonesia
E-mail: zainal@pcr.ac.id

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Abstract

This research aims at exploring the linguistic features employed by advertisers in Cosmopolitan Magazine beauty product advertisements. The study mainly focuses on the use of language in beauty product advertisements and the strategies employed by the advertisers in shaping the ideal concept of women's beauty. This research is conducted under the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis proposed by Fairclough that focuses on a conception of discourse as text (micro level), discourse practice (meso level) and sociocultural practice (macro level). Its aim is to explore the relationships among language, ideology and power and to find out how advertisers persuade the women to buy their products. The result shows that there are some linguistic features employed by the advertisers i.e. positive and negative adjective, pronouns, imperatives, and modality. Meanwhile the strategies employed are positive-self representation, irrational representation, celebrity endorsement, and clinical test proof

Keywords: *Advertisement, CDA, Ideology of beauty*

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is multidisciplinary and has been a subject for many studies. It is mass media content which intends to persuade the viewers, listeners, or audiences to take the actions of buying, be it services, ideas, products, or beliefs. The emergence of advertising started to become popular in the 1950s where industries were in competition to sell the products they offered to the public. As the global economy showed a good development in this era, the ability of consumers to buy also grew. In those days, the goal of this new industry was hard selling which means to sell as many products as they can. The producers started to come up with the new way of marketing in order to be able to penetrate their products to the market.

There are many platforms used by advertising. Back in the 1950s and 1960s where technology has not been as advanced as it is now, the use of posters and catalogues was considered quite popular. Sales representatives were



introduced to promote the products by handling the catalogues to the prospective customers. In those days, printed advertising manifested in many kinds of forms. Billboards, flyers, as well as advertisements in daily newspapers and magazines displayed the products to be marketed to the consumers. People were getting closer to the details of products they might want to buy.

This kind of marketing, of course, will not last in static way. As there are more products introduced to the public, the competition gets tougher day by day. The high competition in attracting prospective customers forces the advertisers to sell more than just a product. They are forced not only to produce qualified products but also how to market them. This condition leads the advertisers to employ sophisticated advertising strategies techniques in order to be able to compete with others. It also happens to beauty product corporations which target women as their major potential customers. They do not only advertise to introduce their products, but also to construct an idea that the ideal problem solving to women's issue can only be obtained by using their products.

The role of media is very obvious in shaping people's perception of an issue. The act of penetrating to audiences' mind has been done for decades and it succeeds in manipulating their point of view. Cook (2001) stated that advertisements inform, persuade, remind, influence, and perhaps change opinions, emotions and attitudes. In other words, it means that advertisements do not only intend to sell products but also to change society's vision in order to believe what they are saying is true to be taken for granted. Once this idea is accepted, whatever they say will be considered as an ideology.

Women's magazine is considered as one of the closest media to expose women with this kind of thought. The advertisers use various ways in building the perception of beauty commencing from using interesting visualization such as displaying beautiful models, clinical tests, celebrity endorsement, to using catchy words to attract their customers' attention.

The use of language as one of the tools in advertisements is inevitable. The texts used by the advertisers become the focus of linguistic research. Discourse is described by Gee (2005) as language in use with more socio-politically oriented



meaning. It means that what is presented by a text carries further meaning than just a statement. Fairclough (1989: 42) defines it as just a particular form of social practice that in its center power and ideology influence and interact with one another. In order to investigate the use of power and ideology in discourse, critical discourse analysis is considered as a useful tool of analysis.

This research aims to analyze the linguistic features used by the advertisers of beauty products in *Cosmopolitan* magazine. The study mainly focuses on the use of language in beauty product advertisements and the strategies employed by the advertisers in shaping the ideal concept of women's beauty.

This research adopts qualitative design. Beauty product advertisements in *Cosmopolitan Magazines* are analyzed. Hence for a descriptive analysis, a qualitative analysis is more appropriate rather than a quantitative analysis. Purposive sampling was done as the study is to investigate only on beauty product advertisements where not many studies have been conducted namely make up, shampoo, anti-aging, and skin care products.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a discourse analytical study that has focus on the way dominance, social power abuse, and inequality are can performed. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality.

According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 55), critical discourse analysis sees discourse-language use both spoken and written-as a form of social practice. In critical discourse analysis, discourse is not viewed only as language study. Language is analyzed not only from the perspective of language aspects, but also is related to context. Context in this circumstance means that language is used for a specific purpose and practice, including power practice.

Critical Discourse Analysis which Fairclough defines as discourse analysis aiming "to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes", is considered an attempt to reveal hidden meanings consciously or unconsciously embedded in an utterance.

In other words, CDA aims to disclose the ideological values of text writers reflected in the discourse. (Fairclough in Locke, 2004:1)

The superstructure specifically tends to be the discourse framework or being organized by conventional schemata. It explains more on how parts of the text arranged into the whole news, for example, the arrangement of the introduction, substance, and conclusion. Which part is placed at the beginning, or which part are placed later, it will be arranged as discourse-framer importance.

As mentioned previously, in analyzing the source of the data of this research, the writer utilizes the CDA model proposed by Fairclough called as three-dimensional model. According to Fairclough each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis.

1. text analysis (Micro Level),
2. processing analysis (Meso Level),
3. social analysis (Macro Level).

The three-dimensional model proposed by Fairclough can be drawn as follows:

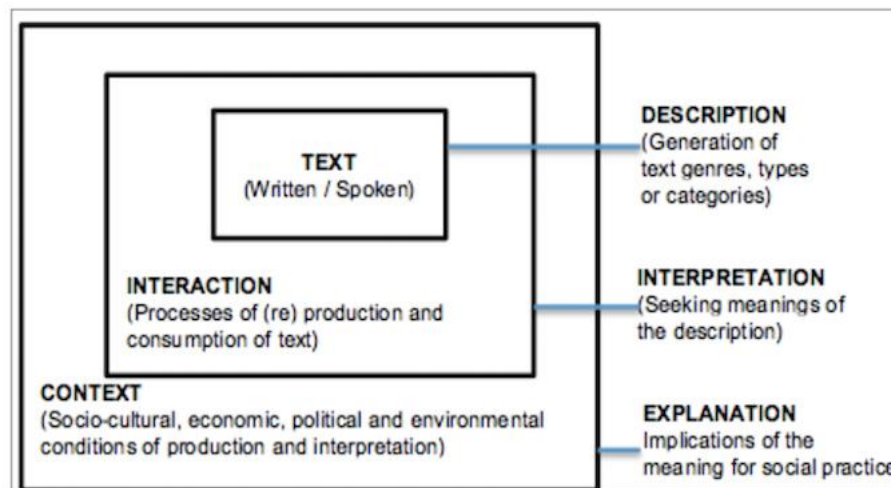


Figure 1. Three dimensional model 1

Textual Analysis (Description)

Generally, texts are viewed as parts of social events in society. Among several ways of communication, people can act and interact in their social events through speaking or writing. To get the interpretation of the features of the text is generally necessary to take account of what other choices might have been made,



i.e. of the systems of options in the discourse types which actual features come from.

Processing Analysis (Interpretation)

The steps of interpretation are formulated through a combination of what exists in the text and what is in the interpreter, in the sense of the members' resources which latter brings to interpretation. In their role of helping to generate interpretations, we may refer members' resources as interpretative procedures. It is often called background knowledge. There are four levels according to the domains of interpretation that can be elaborated as follows:

1. *Surface of utterance.* This first level of interpretation relates to the process by which interpreters convert strings of sounds or mark on paper into recognizable words, phrases, and sentences. To do this they have to draw upon that aspect of their members' resources which is often referred to as their knowledge of the language.
2. *Meaning of utterance.* The second level of interpretation is a matter of assigning meanings to the constituent parts of a text. In some cases, not always, utterances will correspond to sentences. Interpreters here draw upon semantic aspect of their MR- representations of the meaning of words, their ability to combine word meanings and grammatical information and work out implicit meanings to arrive at meanings for whole propositions.
3. *Local coherence.* The third level of interpretations establishes meaning connections between utterances, producing coherent interpretations of pairs and sequences of them. At the third level, interpreters draw upon that aspect of their knowledge of language which has to do with cohesion. But cohesion cannot be reduced to formal cohesion: interpreters can infer coherence relations between utterances even in the absence of formal cohesive cues, on the basis of implicit assumptions. These inferential processes are generally regarded as a matter of pragmatics.



4. *Text structure and 'point'*. Interpretation of text structure at level four is a matter of working out how a whole text hangs together. This involves matching the text with one of a repertoire of schemata, or representations of characteristic patterns of organization associated with different types of discourse. The point of a text is a summary interpretation of the text as a whole which interpreters arrive at.

The steps how interpreters arrive at interpretations are drawn upon the following question:

1. '*What is going on?*' we must make finer discriminations which can be divided into *activity*, *topic*, and *purpose*. Activity is the most general that allows us to identify a situation in terms of one of a set of activity types which are recognized as distinct within a particular social order in a particular institution, and which have larger scale textual structures of the sort referred to under the question what larger scale structure does the text have. For instance, in police work, activity types would include making an arrest, entering a report, interviewing witnesses, examining a suspect and so forth. In this case, the activity type is interviewing a witness. The topic here is the description of an alleged offender. Similarly, activity types are also associated with particular institutionally recognized purposes.
2. '*Who is involved?*'. In the case of the former, one is trying to specify which subject positions are set up. It is important to note that subject positions are multi dimensional. First, one dimension derives from the activity type; in this case an interview. Second, the institution ascribes social identities to the subjects who function within it; in our example, we have a policeman and a member of the public who is furthermore a witness and a likely victim. Third, different situations have different speaking and listening positions associated with them.
3. '*In what relations?*' When it comes to the question of relations, we look at subject positions more dynamically, in terms of what relationship of power, social distance, and so forth are set up and



enacted in the situation. In this case, one would be concerned with the nature of relationships between members of the police and members of the public.

4. *'What is the role of language?'* Language is being used in an instrumental way as a part of wider institutional and bureaucratic objective. The role of language in this sense not only determines its genre, but also its channel, whether spoken or written language is used.

Social Analysis (Explanation)

The transition from the stage of interpretation to the stage of explanation can be made by noting that, when aspects of members' resources are drawn upon as interpretative procedures in the production and interpretation of texts, they are thereby reproduced. Reproduction is for participants a generally unintended and unconscious side-effect. Reproduction connects the stages of interpretation and explanation, because whereas the former is concerned with how MR are drawn upon in processing discourse, the latter is concerned with the social constitution and change of MR, including of course their reproduction in discourse practice.

The objective of the stage of explanation is to portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures.

Ideology

In a discourse, the producer is possible to insert his ideology since text, conversation, and other forms of communication provide a platform for ideology manifestation to appear as practice or as the reflection of certain ideology. Dijk (1997: 25) stated that discourse in this approach essentially serves as the medium by which ideologies are persuasively communicated in society, and thereby helps reproduce power and dominance of specific group or classes. Classic theories about ideology state that ideology is built by dominant ruling group to be reproduced. In order to make the ideology is taken for granted, the ruling group needs to bring an



awareness to the society. Ideology will only be effective if it is based on truth that the targeted group/society consider it as common sense.

Ideologies, thus defined, have many cognitive and social functions. First of all, as explained above, they organize and ground the social representations shared by the members of (ideological) groups. Secondly, they are the ultimate basis of the discourses and other social practices of the members of social groups as group members. Thirdly, they allow members to organize and coordinate their (joint) actions and interactions in view of the goals and interests of the group as a whole. Finally, they function as the part of the sociocognitive interface between social structures (conditions, etc.) of groups on the one hand, and their discourses and other social practices on the other hand.

Some ideologies may thus function to legitimate domination, but also to articulate resistance in relationships of power, as is the case for feminist or pacifist ideologies. Other ideologies function as the basis of the 'guidelines' of professional behaviour—for instance for journalists or scientists.

Advertising

Advertising can be defined as an identified sponsor that has paid for any form of non-personal communication about an organisation, product, service or idea that has passed through a mass communication channel to reach a broad audience. Speaking of advertising, it is inevitable that we also need to discuss the term 'advertising campaign' that refer to the planning, creation, administration and implementation for advertising activities. This can be carried out as stand-alone activity or as a series of activities (Yadin, 2002).

In the communication process model, there is a fact that not all messages get through. The source, message and channel may be right but the receiver can still choose to ignore the information. It is important that the customer decodes the message right and the process model is in some cases too focused on what to do up until the point where the customer is met with the message.



METHODS

This research adopts qualitative design. A qualitative study was appropriate since it seeks to investigate how discourse in advertisements involves people's construction of meanings. A qualitative research explores questions such as what, why and how, rather than how many and how much; it is primarily concerned with meaning rather than measuring (Keegan, 2009:11). Beauty product advertisements in Cosmopolitan Magazines are analyzed. Hence for a descriptive analysis, a qualitative analysis is more appropriate rather than a quantitative analysis. Purposive sampling was done as the study is to investigate only on beauty product advertisements where not many studies have been conducted namely make up, shampoo, anti-aging, and skin care products.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains the linguistic features employed by the advertisers of beauty product and strategies used by the advertisers in Cosmopolitan Magazine to shape the ideology of beauty towards the reader. Each data is presented by analyzing the text and classify them to which linguistic features and strategies they belong to. The analysis of the data are be classified into the following classifications:

- 1) Linguistics features employed by the advertisers of beauty products in Cosmopolitan Magazine:

Datum 1: *What makes a woman feel beautiful? A youthful radiance that shines from within.* (Anti-aging serum, Lancome)

In this datum, the linguistic feature employed by the advertiser is *positive adjective* that can be seen from the word *youthful radiance*. This word illustrates the positivity of the product that can give the effect of radiant like a youth to the customers who use this product. The word *youth* itself carries the meaning of freshness that is owned by people in young age.

Datum 2: *Join the cult. Drier skins welcome.* (Moisturizing cream and lotion, Clinique)



The sentence in datum 2 contains *imperative sentence* that can be seen in the sentence *Join the cult*. The product being advertised here is a moisturizing cream and lotion that is marketed for women with dry skin. From the sentence *Join the cult*, it is seen that the advertiser is trying to persuade women to be part of the relatively small group of people which have the beliefs that having a dry skin is something that needs to be solved. It can be understood that by using this product, women with dry skin can be part of those who already overcome this problem.

Datum 3: *Change the way you see lipstick. Revlon Ultra-HD Lipstick. Light-weight, High-definition color.* (Lipstick, Revlon)

There are two types of linguistic features employed by the advertisers in this data. First is *imperative sentence* that can be seen in *Change the way you see lipstick*. In this sentence, the advertisers intended to tell the readers to change their perspective on current lipstick product. If we see from overall sentence, the advertiser mentioned the word Ultra-HD that can be interpreted as crystal clear, vivid, and colorful. If we relate this words to the sentence *Change the way you see lipstick*, it can be interpreted that the products exist in the market these days do not offer best quality that a lipstick can offer. Lipstick is a beauty product that aims to enhance the color and the look of women lips. This also means that a vivid color of women's lips is a life matter.

The second type of linguistic feature exists in this advertisement is positive adjective that can be seen from the phrase *Light-weight, High-definition color*. This phrase means that although the product offers high-definition color, the weight is less than average products in the market. It gives an impression that this is how a lipstick quality should be; vivid in color, but less in weight.

Datum 4: *Eye Opener. Wake up to uplifted lashes! Eye-awakening volume, lift and length. Cucumber-fresh, vitamin-charged. Eyes look energized and revitalized.* (Mascara, Rimmel)

This data contains *disjunctive syntax* and Positive adjective. Disjunctive syntax can be defined as sentences without verb or subjects and usually consists of one or two grammatical items only. The use of *disjunctive syntax* can be seen in



Eye Opener. It carries a meaning that this product can make the eyes look more open and alive. The product being advertised in the data is mascara. As we know, mascara is used by women to enhance the look of their eyes. It can give the effect of more volume into the lashes as well as a touch of brightening sparkle to the eyes.

The second feature employed by the advertisers in the data is positive adjective that can be seen in the text *Cucumber-fresh, vitamin-charged*. As we know, cucumber can give the effect of freshness when applied to our skin or eyes. By reading this text, the readers can feel the sensation of healthy eyelashes. The text *vitamin-charged* gives the effect of trust to the customers since it carries positive meaning.

Datum 5: *Maybe she's born with it. Maybe It's Maybeline.*
(Lipstick, Maybeline)

The use of pronouns provides the sense of friendliness. In this data, the use of pronoun *she* and *it* appear to give friendly atmosphere to women so that they will easily accept a product recommended to them. Advertisement acts as if it talks to the reader and gives the feeling of closeness as if a friend talk to them. The use of first and second pronoun serves an indication as if the reader is making a promise that is humble and honest.

Datum 6: *With Dove's 1/4 moisturizing cream, you can have softer, smoother, and more radiant skin, everytime you cleanse.*
(Soap, Dove)

This datum contains modality which can be seen from the use of the word *can*. The use of modality *can* shows how the product can give the possible results which are softer, smoother, and radiant skin if the product is used by the readers. The sentence is simple and declarative type. The use of modality shows the benefits of using the product.

- 2) Strategies used by the advertisers to shape the ideology of beauty towards the reader

Datum 7: *We love lipstick that speaks louder than words* (Lipstick, Mary Kay)



In this datum, the strategy used by the advertiser is *unrealistic representation* which means showing a representation that is out of our comprehension. From the text *we love lipstick that speaks louder than words*, it is seen that the advertiser mentioned something unrealistic as lipstick is a non-living matter but it does something that is only owned by human being, which is speaking. In this circumstance, the deeper meaning that is conveyed by the text is that lipstick can be signified as the messenger to deliver women's beauty. If we take this into an analogy that when someone speaks louder, her voice can be heard. Therefore, by wearing this product, women can emphasize their look since their lips are attractive and beautiful.

Datum 8: *I want to glow from inside out -Katie Holmes-* (Olay Regenerist Luminous, Olay)

This datum contains *celebrity endorsement* as the text *I want to glow from inside out* was mentioned by Katie Holmes. From the statement, it is seen that the product used Katie Holmes, a Hollywood actress to give a testimonial that the product can give her the glow that she expected to shine inside out. The fact that an A list Hollywood celebrity used this product give the reader a comprehension that this product is worth the money. Celebrities are very close to the association of the people who always prioritize their look. It is very important for them to maintain the beauty in order to stay long in the industry which demands physical perfection.

Datum 9: *33% clinically measured reduction of visible deep wrinkles in just 10 days.* (Anti-aging cream and serum, ALGENIST)

One of the strategies employed by the advertisers in making the readers to believe in what they are selling is by giving clinical test proof. By reading the proven clinical test, the readers will gain the sense of trust and comfort due to the clinical test given shows that the product really works in helping them to solve their problems. In this data, the advertisers mention how the product being advertised can reduce wrinkles 33% in just 10 days. This strategy will give the readers the sense that the product is definitely worth trying to solve their wrinkles



issue. It is also implied that the ideal skin for women is the skin with less wrinkles and smooth.

Datum 10: *An expert kit to create any look.* (Brow Stylist, L'OREAL)

In this datum, positive-self interpretation is employed by the advertiser. As it is seen, the product being offered is a brow stylist that can enhance the volume and the look of women's eyebrow. The use of word *expert* shows that this product gives anything that women need to improve their eyebrow. The word *expert* means a person who has comprehensive and authoritative quality in specific area which in this extent means that the product possesses the top quality in giving women more desiring eyebrows.

CONCLUSION

From the data analysis, it can be concluded that in shaping the ideal concept of women's beauty, the advertisers apply several linguistic features such as positive and negative adjective, modality, imperatives, and pronouns. These linguistic features are aimed at targeting women to believe in the ideal concept of beauty they portray in their products so that women will be attracted to use the products. In marketing their products, the advertisers also employ several strategies such as celebrity endorsement, unrealistic representation, clinical test proof, and positive-self representation. This phenomenon shows how the power of language can be utilized in persuading women to buy the concept of ideal beauty given by the advertisers.

There are a lot more analysis that can be done regarding the use of language in advertisement. The analysis can also be expanded to the use of linguistic features in other media such as tv advertisement, social media, etc. Future research may include other products as well as bigger sample size.

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